

REMARKS

In the March 15, 2004 Office Action, the Examiner noted that claims 1-13 were pending in the application and were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103. In rejecting the claims, U.S. Patents 5,440,624 to Shoof, II; 5,070,470 to Scully et al.; 5,237,499 to Garback; 6,151,575 to Newman et al.; 6,393,460 to Gruen et al.; and 6,154,764 to Nitta et al. (References A-F, respectively) were cited. Claims 1-13 remain in the case. The Examiner's rejections are traversed below.

The Application

The application is directed to a system for determining whether to hold a face-to-face conference based on an index relating to an amount of discussion during an electronic conference.

The Prior Art

The Shoof, II patent is directed to a system for managing and controlling adaptively the progress of an electronic conference. The Scully et al. patent is directed to a system for generating a data stream based on a standard composed by a calendar owner in an interactive manner. The Garback patent is directed to a system for tour plans and tour reservations. The Newman et al. patent is directed to a voice recognition system. The Gruen et al. is directed to a system for informing a user about topics of discussions held via on-line chat. The Nitta et al patent is directed to an on-line forum type electronic conference system.

Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103

In item 1 on pages 2-6 of the Office Action, claims 1, 2 and 9-13 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shoof, II in view of Scully et al. It was asserted that the combination of these references would make it obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to produce a system providing "a convenient way of scheduling a meeting in response to a warning message, which monitors the user ... activity" (Office Action, page 3, lines 4-5). However, it was acknowledged that the warning message generated by the system disclosed in Shoof, II indicated "when the current speaker's communications time-period is about to expire" (Office Action, page 2, last two lines). While this is an indication of user activity, it is not "an index indicating an amount of the information stored about the discussion" (e.g., claim 1, lines 4-5). The amount of time allocated to a user to talk in an electronic meeting may have nothing whatsoever to do with the amount of information stored, since the time limit relates to the total length of the meeting and how time during the meeting is divided among speakers. Nothing

has been cited or found in either Shoof, II or Scully et al. teaching or suggesting "calculating an index indicating an amount of the information stored about the discussion and judging whether to hold a face-to-face conference based on the index" as recited at the end of claim 1, or the similar limitations recited in claims 10-13. Since claim 2 depends from claim 1, it is submitted that claims 1, 2 and 10-13 patentably distinguish over the prior art for the reasons discussed above.

Claim 9 recites "calculating an index indicating a possibility of the discussion diverging and judging whether to hold a face-to-face conference based on the index" (claim 9, last two lines). Nothing was cited in either Shoof, II or Scully et al. regarding calculation of such an index, or why it would be obvious or even possible to calculate an index "indicating a possibility of the discussion diverging" (claim 9, last two lines). Therefore, it is submitted that claim 9 patentably distinguishes over the prior art for these reasons.

In item 2 on pages 6-7 of the Office Action, claims 3 and 4 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shoof, II in view of Scully et al. and Garback. Nothing was cited in Garback suggesting modification of Shoof, II and Scully et al. to overcome the deficiencies noted above with respect to claim 1. Since claims 3 and 4 depend from claim 1, it is submitted that claims 3 and 4 patentably distinguish over the prior art for the reasons discussed above with respect to claim 1.

In item 3 on pages 7-8 of the Office Action, claim 5 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shoof, II in view of Scully et al. and Newman et al. The cited portion of Newman et al. merely describes keeping track of the number of speakers for whom transforms have been created. No suggestion was cited or has been found of using this information to determine whether to change an electronic conference to a face-to-face conference. Therefore, it is submitted that claim 5 patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

In item 4 on pages 8-9 of the Office Action, claims 6 and 8 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shoof, II in view of Scully et al. and Gruen et al. The cited portion of Gruen et al. describes clustering of on-line, i.e., ongoing, "chat" between users via a network, presumably to aid users in identifying current chat sessions that may be of interest. No suggestion was cited or found in Gruen et al. of using a "number of utterances ... sufficient to create a meaningful data set" (column 7, lines 20-22) to end an on-line session and have the conversation take place face-to-face. On the contrary, the "predefined threshold T" (column 7, line 21) is a minimum threshold sufficient to identify the utterances for labeling as a cluster. For the above reasons, it is submitted that claims 6 and 8 patentably distinguish over the prior art.

In item 5 on pages 9-10 of the Office Action, claim 7 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Shoof, II in view of Scully et al. and Nitta et al. In rejecting claim 7, it was noted that Nitta et al. states in the Background of the Invention section that "a discussion ... [may be] represented by a tree structure" (column 1, line 20). While this may suggest the limitation recited on line 2 of claim 7, nothing has been cited or found in any of the prior art suggesting using "a depth of the tree structure as the index, and if the depth of the tree structure exceeds a specific value ... [holding a] face-to-face conference" (claim 7, lines 3-5). Therefore, it is submitted that claim 7 patentably distinguishes over the prior art.

Summary

It is submitted that the references cited by the Examiner, taken individually or in combination, do not teach or suggest the features of the present claimed invention. Thus, it is submitted that claims 1-13 are in a condition suitable for allowance. Reconsideration of the claims and an early Notice of Allowance are earnestly solicited.

Finally, if there are any formal matters remaining after this response, the Examiner is requested to telephone the undersigned to attend to these matters.

If there are any additional fees associated with filing of this Amendment, please charge the same to our Deposit Account No. 19-3935.

Respectfully submitted,

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